

Public Attitudes Towards HIV/AIDS

Family Homework

About Family Homework:

All family homework exercises are optional. Family homework is for two of you... the student and an adult in your family (parent, step-parent, aunt, uncle, etc.)

If you want credit, turn in a Family Homework Confirmation Slip by _____ .

Directions:

1. Read this article aloud together: "EILEEN: A Woman with AIDS."
2. Discuss these questions:
 - Why do so many people still think HIV is only a gay man's disease?
 - What does Eileen mean by "the stigma of AIDS"?
 - How can women protect themselves against HIV?
 - Some of Eileen's friends wouldn't invite her to their homes after she got HIV. What if a close friend of our family got HIV? How would our family react?

Eileen: A Woman With AIDS

Eileen is a woman living with AIDS. She is also a mother of two children (in third and fourth grades). Before she got sick, Eileen was a travel agent. She liked to backpack and dance. Four years ago, after two years of strange illnesses and infections, she found out she had HIV. She tried using drug treatments, but they made her too sick to get up in the morning. She had to stop. Last year she was finally diagnosed with AIDS.

Eileen knew her ex-boyfriend Jeff had used injection drugs. She never used drugs herself, but she got the virus from having sex with him. Last week, she found out that Jeff recently died from AIDS.

Her friends had different reactions when they heard the news about Eileen. Some of them drifted away. She says,

"I was surprised and hurt. I couldn't believe that they would drop me, just when I needed them most. It's not good for them, either. I know they'll feel guilty after I die."

Most of her friends were great.

"It's been very emotional — we cry, we scream, we laugh. We're so sad that we will have to say 'good-bye' so soon."

She was so weak, she quit her job. It also became very difficult to take care of her kids, so a close friend of the family moved in with them. Eileen made plans for her children to be adopted by her sister in another state after she dies.

Eileen is writing letters to the children to have when they are older.

"Sometimes I feel like I'll die of a broken heart before I die of AIDS. I worry about how you'll do after I'm gone. I'm so sorry you have had to live with the stigma of AIDS."

Eileen does her best to educate people about HIV. This helps her deal with her own feelings better. She's also in a support group for women with HIV. To Eileen, it's very important that more women with HIV speak up about the prejudice and the myth that HIV is only a gay man's disease.

"Anyone can get HIV/AIDS ... it matters what you do... not what you feel."